

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6250

INFO AMCONSUL MEDAN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JAKARTA 0808

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ID

SUBJECT: STRETCHING TOWARD THE BREAKING POINT

REF: A) JAKARTA 0332, B) JAKARTA 0520

1. SUMMARY: INDONESIA'S SENIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO ISSUE STERN PUBLIC WARNINGS AGAINST ILLEGAL DISSIDENCE. WHILE STUDENTS HAVE LARGELY CONFINED THEIR DEMONSTRATIONS TO THEIR CAMPUSES IN RECENT WEEKS, THEIR VERBAL ATTACKS ARE BECOMING SHARPER AND MORE PERSONALIZED, FOR THE FIRST TIME EXPLICITLY AND PUBLICLY CALLING FOR SUHARTO'S REMOVAL. ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE SOURCE, AN AMERGENCY PLANNING SESSION OF TOP INDONESIAN SECURITY OFFICIALS WILL BE HELD THIS EVENING TO REVIEW THE STATE OF PLAY AS THE MARCH MPR SESSION APPROACHES. BOTH SIDES - THE GOVERNMENT AND THE STUDENTS - HAVE APPARENTLY DRAWN FIRM LINES. UNLESS SOME WAY IS FOUND TO RELEASE THE TENSION - AND NONE IS YET IN SIGHT - AN UNTOWARD INCIDENT OR A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO CRACK DOWN HARD COULD LEAD TO A VIOLENT CLASH IN THE STREETS. WITH THE ACTIVE MILITARY STILL APPARENTLY FIRMLY LINED UP BEHIND THE PRESIDENT, EVEN THIS EVENTUALITY WOULD NOT PREVENT SUHARTO'S RE-ELECTION IN MARCH,
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BUT IT MIGHT CATALYZE A QUIET SEARCH WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES FOR A MORE ATTRACTIVE SUCCESSOR. END SUMMARY.

2. ONE BY ONE, SINCE THE DECMEBER 15 ARMED FORCES STATEMENT, INDONESIA'S MOST SENIOR MILITARY AND SECURITY OFFICIALS HAVE ISSUED INCREASINGLY STERN WARNINGS AGAINST THE CONTINUATION OF ILLEGAL DISSIDENT

ACTIVITY. THE MOST RECENT WARNINGS CAME FROM KOPKAMTIB CHIEF OF STAFF ADMIRAL SUDOMO, WHO SAID THAT HE COULD NOT BE BLAMED IF ARRESTS WERE NECESSARY SINCE HIS WARNINGS HAD GONE UNHEEDED, AND ARMED FORCES DEPUTY COMMANDER GENERAL SURONO, WHO ONCE AGAIN PLEDGED THAT THE MILITARY WOULD TAKE FIRM STEPS AGAINST CONTINUED ILLEGAL STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. SHORTLY BEFORE, ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL PANGGABEAN CHARACTERIZED DISSIDENT ACTIVITY AS "NO LONGER AN OBSTRUCTION OR AN IRRITANT BUT A DIRECT THREAT TO THE EXISTENCE OF PANCASILA AND THE CONSTITUTION OF 1945". BECAUSE OF THAT, SAID PANGGABEAN, THE ARMED FORCES CAN "NO LONGER TOLERATE THOSE WHO ARE ACTING ILLEGALLY AND MUST MOVE FIRMLY AGAINST THEM."

3. STUDENT ACTIVISTS, AWARE OF THEIR IMTOTENCE IN THE FACE OF A CONCERTED MILITARY CRACKDOWN, HAVE MUTED THE PHYSICAL SCOPE OF THEIR ACTIVITIES. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE NUMEROUS DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES AND THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS AND TO THE READING OF STATEMENTS AND HANGING OF BANNERS. STUDENTS HAVE NOT RISKED TAKING TO THE STREETS AND SECURITY FORCES HAVE NOT REPEATED THEIR ACTION IN SURABAYA OF AGGRESSIVELY MOVING ONTO CAMPUS TO BREAK UP MEETINGS.

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4. THE STUDENTS HAVE, HOWEVER, CONTINUED TO TURN OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS FOR ON-CAMPUS GATHERINGS AND HAVE NOT PULLED THEIR VERBAL PUNCHES. THEIR ATTACKS ON THE CONTRARY HAVE BECOME SHARPER AND MORE PERSONALIZED, WITH STUDENTS OF THE BANDUNG TECHNICAL INSTITUTE (ITB) FOR THE FIRST TIME ON JANUARY 16 PUBLICLY CALLING FOR SUHARTO'S OUSTER, SAYING THAT "STUDENTS DO NOT TRUST AND DO NOT WANT THE REELECTION OF SUHARTO AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC". A RELIABLE SOURCE TELLS US UNIV. OF INDONESIA STUDENTS WILL ISSUE A SIMILAR STATEMENT ON JAN 21.

5. THE GOVERNMENT (NOT TO MENTION THE JAKARTA DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC AT LARGE) IS CLEARLY BECOMING INCREASINGLY JITTERY OVER STUDENT AND OTHER DISSIDENCE. LIM BIAN KIE, THE CHIEF AIDE OF SUHARTO'S POLITICAL TROUBLE-SHOOTER LT. GENERAL ALI MURTOPO, TOLD US IN CONFIDENCE TODAY THAT A HASTILY-CONVENED MEETING OF SOME OF INDONESIA'S SENIOR SECURITY OFFICIALS WILL DISCUSS THE EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION LATER THIS EVENING. SCHEDULED TO ATTEND ARE INTERIOR MINISTER GENERAL AMIRMACHMUD, STATE SECRETARY LT. GENERAL SUDHARMONO (UNDOUBTEDLY ACTING AS SUHARTO'S MONITOR), SURONO,

MURTOPO, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER SOEDJONO HOERMARDANI,
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF MAJ. GEN. BENNY MURDANI
AND OTHERS.

6. COMMENT. BECAUSE THE FORUM IN WHICH BIAN KIE PASSED
THIS INFORMATION DID NOT PERMIT FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONING,
THE PRECISE PURPOSE OF TONIGHT'S EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
IS NOT CLEAR. IT CONCEIVABLY COULD LEAD TO ARRESTS
OF PROMINENT DISSIDENTS OR, EQUALLY PLAUSIBLE, TO A NEW
EFFORT TO DEFUSE THE TENSION THROUGH SOME QUIET COM-
MUNICATION WITH THHE DISSIDENTS. IT MIGHT EVEN REPRESENT
A STRATEGY SESSION AMONG GOI "MODERATES", IN AN ATTEMPT
TO HEAD OFF STRINGENT SECURITY MEASURES WHICH OTHERS LIKE
PANGGABEAN ARE KNOWN TO BE COMTEMPLATING. (INTERESTINGLY,
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BIAN KIE DID NOT MENTION THE ATTENDANCE OF EITHER
PANGGABEAN OR SUDOMO AT TONIGHT'S CONCLAVE, DESPITE
THEIR OBVIOUS INVOLVEMENT IN THE SECURITY PROBLEM.)

7. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THE SITUATION HAS BECOME INCREAS-
INGLY DANGEROUS. SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT TRY A
LIGHTENING CRACKDOWN, EVEN IF LIMITED TO A FEW PROMINENT
DISSIDENTS, THE POSSIBILITY OF REACTIVE AND POSSIBLY
LARGE SCCALE DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD BE HIGH. WHATEVER
THEIR CAUSE, CONTINUED DEMONSTRATIONS RUN AN INCREASING
RISK OF ONTOWARD INCIDENT RESULTING IN SERIOUS INJURY
OR DEATH TO A SECURITY OFFICER OR DEMONSTRATOR, IN
TURN INCITING SPIN OFF DEMONSTRATIONS AND, POTENTIALLY,
A DANGEROUS SPIRAL OF ACTION AND REACTION. OUR BEST
ESTIMATE IS STILL THAT THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN, BUT THE
MARGIN OF SAFETY IS BECOMING DANGEROUSLY THIN.

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 JAKARTA 0808

8. EVEN THE WORST CASE WE ENVISAGE WOULD NOT IMMEDIATELY
THREATEN SUHARTO'S REELECTION. ON THE CONTRARY, PUBLIC
BREAKDOWNS OF ORDER ARE IN THE SHORT RUN MORE LIKELY
TO SOLIDIFY RATHER THAN SPLIT THE ARMED FORCES, AND INDUCE
THEM TO DEFEND THE STATUS QUO UNTIL ORDER IS CLEARLY
RESTORED. RUMORS OF ANTI-MILITARY SENTIMENT IN THE
MILITARY CONTINUE TO PROLIFERATE AND HAVE RECENTLY BEEN
FED BY A PROVOCATIVE, SEEMINGLY ANTI-SUHARTO
SPEECH BY FORMER WEST JAVA MILITARY COMMANDER AND ASEAN
SECRETARY GENERAL LT. GENERAL DHARSONO, WHICH CHARACTERIZED
THE CURRENT SITUATION IN INDONESIA AS FAR FROM THE IDEALS
ENVISIONED IN 1945 AND 1966. DHARSONO HAS LONG BEEN
REGARDED AS A "CLOSET" CRITIC OF THE NEW ORDER,
HOWEVER, AND WE CONTINUE TO FIND NO CREDIBLE EVIDENCE
THAT HE HAS ANY INFLUENCE IN THE ACTIVE MILITARY OR
THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT ACTIVE MILITARY LEADERS ARE NOW
SEEKING SUHARTO'S OUSTER OR URGING THE SELECTION OF A
NEW CANDIDATE FOR THE MARCH ELECTIONS. SPEAKER OF
PARLIAMENT ADAM MALIK, IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE
AMBASSADOR, DID SAY THAT SOME IN THE MILITARY MIGHT
BE ENCOURAGING THE STUDENTS, BUT ADDED THAT MILITARY
LEADERS WITH AUTHORITY OVER TROOPS WERE UNANIMOUSLY
BEHIND SUHARTO.

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9. A SIGNIFICANT BREAKDOWN IN PUBLIC ORDER, HOWEVER,
WOULD RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT SUHARTO'S LONGER TERM
PROSPECTS. IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY FURTHER UNDERCUT THE
PRESIDENT'S ALREADY SLIPPING PRESTIGE AND COULD ENCOURAGE
THE BEGINNING OF AN ACTIVE BUT QUIET SEARCH WITHIN THE
MILITARY FOR A MORE PALATABLE SUCCESSOR.

MASTERS

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